

## ROPA Visits

### I. Preparing for the Visit

The ongoing maintenance of a college's or university's Institutional Portfolio is the primary means through which an institution may prepare for a visit. Self-studies and documentation that are begun in the year a visit is scheduled may not provide the institution with enough evidence for a visiting team to confirm the meeting of a standard. Evaluated portfolios, for example, will need to be collected for several years across programs in order to assure that the Review Team has a strong sample to review. (Please note that candidate work in advanced degree programs will also need to be documented through a portfolio or alternate assessment.) Institutions should view the visit as the opportunity to provide additional evidence that is necessary for the team to confirm that the program approval standards are being met.

One year beforehand, the VSBPE will send a letter to the institution notifying the educator preparation program of the expiration date of a program's approval. The institution then suggests possible dates for the external review to the VSBPE. The VTDOE will work with the institution to arrive at a mutually acceptable date for the Review Team's visit.

### II. Review Teams

The VTDOE and the VSBPE work to create a review team that is balanced in terms of expertise, content knowledge, and instructional level.

It is the policy of the VSBPE to attract the most qualified individuals to serve on visiting teams in the education preparation program approval process. Team members must be independent and impartial in order to ensure that team recommendations are based solely on the merits of the institution visited. All team members will be trained in the *Five Standards for Vermont Educators: A Vision for Schooling*, the *16 Principles for Vermont Educators*, the *Vermont Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*, the *Grade Expectations*, the endorsement requirements, and the ROPA process for reviewing programs.

The Review Team will be determined by the VTDOE and approved by the institution. The Team will then be approved by the VSBPE. The size of the team depends on the number of licensing areas to be evaluated and is comprised of specialists in the endorsement(s) area being sought. The team will include:

- One member of the VSBPE
- One member from an educator preparation institution
- Two members at large
- Additional members may be added to the team as needed

(For further details on the VSBPE's policy on the selection of Review Team members, please see Appendix F.)

### **III. Pre-Visit Conference**

Once the Institutional Portfolio has been received, the Chair of the Review Team and the ROPA Consultant will meet with the coordinator of the preparation program(s) in order to discuss and set the itinerary for the visit.

The outcomes of the Pre-Visit Conference are as follows:

- (1) Clear understanding of the purpose, process, responsibilities, and appeal rights available to the institution
- (2) Schedule for the on-site visit
- (3) Plans for logistics of the visit (see below)
- (4) Identification of individuals from the institution who will participate in discussions and interviews
- (5) Selection of field sites and individuals at the sites whom the team can interview
- (6) Selection criteria for the licensure portfolios that will be available for the team to review
- (7) General description of the documents and artifacts that will be made available to the team in the evidence room
- (8) Plan for transcript reviews (this “audit” may occur during the Pre-Visit Conference or during the visit itself)

The institution should review the lists below and have preliminary responses ready for the planning visit.

#### **A. Logistics**

The institution should be prepared to provide the following support:

- Lodging near campus that will provide: lodging for the team (Saturday night arrival for the team chair and team members who may be traveling long distances, Sunday arrival for others, Wednesday departure for all); meeting space from Sunday evening through Wednesday mid-day (including a computer, printer, and web access and light refreshments each evening and on Wednesday morning)
- Meeting space at or near lodging for Monday and Tuesday evenings
- Parking at the hotel and institution for team members
- Breakfast either at the hotel or in the evidence room on Sunday through Wednesday
- Lunch in the evidence room on Sunday through Tuesday
- Dinner with faculty, administrators, and candidates on Sunday. Dinner for team members Monday and Tuesday evening.
- An evidence room on campus throughout the visit that can accommodate exhibits and provide work space for the team. The room should also have a computer with web access and a printer.
- Interview space to accommodate candidate and faculty interviews outside of the evidence room on Monday and Tuesday
- Coffee, tea, water and light snacks should be available in the evidence room throughout the visit.

## **B. Interviews, Meetings, and Other Events to Schedule**

In preparation for the planning visit, the institution should begin to identify the individuals who will play a key role in each of the meetings and interview sessions. The questions that follow can guide the institution's preliminary planning.

- What is the location of the evidence room?
- Who will meet the team and provide an overview of the evidence room?
- Who will attend the dinner on the first night? How will the institution highlight or set the context for its program to team members? A list of attendees should include designation of individuals by programs represented or offices on campus. Where will the dinner be held?
- What candidates will be selected by the programs for interviews for each program? This should include candidates early in the program, in the middle of the program, and late in the program. When are they available for interviews? Where will the interviews be held?
- How will the program involve program graduates for interviews? Who will attend? Who will need to be interviewed over the phone?
- What schools/districts will be selected by the programs for team visits? This list should include solid partnerships and representatives of all of the programs. Who will drive teams to the sites?
- Whom will the programs invite to a meeting of arts and science faculty members who are partners in educator preparation? Where will it be held?
- Whom will the program invite to a meeting of individuals who are knowledgeable about the institution's commitment to issues of diversity? Where will it be held?
- Whom will the program invite to a meeting of individuals who are knowledgeable about the institution's resources? Where will it be held?
- Whom will the program select for interviews from the group of cooperating teachers? This may be several small groups, depending on the number of programs at the institution. Where will they be held?
- What other individuals or groups should the team meet in order to fully evaluate ways in which the program meets the standards? Are there other places the team should visit?
- Whom will the program invite for the exit report? Where will it be?

VTDOE will work with the institution to develop a detailed agenda for the visit, including times, locations, and lists of interviewees. The agenda will be reviewed, revised, and refined prior to the arrival of the visiting team. At the visit, be prepared to provide a list of all current candidates, including status (just admitted; just approved to student teach; currently student teaching).

Whenever possible, interviews will be scheduled prior to the site visit. However, if the team decides there is a need to schedule other interviews, the chair will work with the institution to make these arrangements during the visit. Additionally, it should be noted that upon occasion a scheduled interview may need to be canceled or rescheduled. While the team makes every effort to stay on schedule, the Review Team's needs require some flexibility.

## **IV. Evidence Room**

The Review Team will need to have a private work room available on campus throughout the visit; this room may also be used to display evidence. The evidence room allows the institution to organize and display evidence that demonstrates how programs meet standards.

Institutions may choose to display some or all of their evidence on the institution's website, or in an "electronic evidence room." The Institutional Portfolio might, for instance, contain links to supporting evidence. The VSBPE believes that the electronic versions of documents and collections of candidate work will make it easier for institutions to prepare for a visit. Please bear in mind that electronic evidence should be easy to navigate and designed to facilitate team members' moving easily through evidence without scrolling through large documents. Whether electronic or paper, evidence should include program assessments of candidate proficiencies and the effectiveness of the institution. (See Appendix E for a sample of an electronic portfolio format.)

Institutions should clearly label and key to the standards all evidence online and in the evidence room. Review Teams find it very helpful to have evidence labeled by standard. Institutions are required to compile an index of all evidence in the evidence room to distribute to the team. If evidence is located somewhere other than the evidence room, the list should indicate where to find it. Institutions should not include information that doesn't directly link to the standards.

## **V. Visits**

The purpose of the site visit is to enable the Review Team to gather evidence needed to verify and evaluate a program's performance. Although the specific agenda for an on-site visit will depend upon the unique characteristics of each program, the core activities include: visiting field sites; interviewing faculty, administrators, candidates and graduates; reviewing candidate portfolios; and examining supporting documentation.

All on-site visits have three phases:

- The first phase involves orienting the team and developing an understanding of the context of the institution and programs.
- The second and longest phase is data collection; the team gathers data from interviews and observations, and from analyses of portfolios and documents.
- The final phase is the Team's evaluation of the institution and its programs upon reviewing the evidence and using the scoring rubrics.

Typically, visits begin on a Sunday and conclude on Wednesday afternoon. However, this schedule is not specified in regulation and can be adjusted to whatever is most appropriate for a specific institution. (A sample visit schedule can be found in Appendix E.)

## **VI. Exit Reports**

The team's final evaluation of the evidence, as based on the scoring rubrics, will be presented in an exit report on the last day of the visit. The presentation of the exit report will include the Chair of the Review Team, the ROPA Consultant, and representatives from the institution.

The purpose of the exit report is to share the team's preliminary findings and overall evaluation with the institution. This is not a time to discuss or debate the team's findings. The institution will have the opportunity to respond to the team's findings once it receives the draft written report.

The team will begin their report by reviewing the institution's rating on each of the seven standards. These ratings provide an overview of the institution as a whole in its efforts to meet the program approval standards. The institution may be found to *meet standard*, to be *approaching standard*, to be *emergent* or to have *no evidence*.

The team will then proceed to ranking each of the institution's individual programs. The team can recommend for each program *full approval* for a six-year period, *conditional approval* of less than six years, or *deny approval*.

The Review Team may also recommend stipulations for the improvement of the institution or individual programs. Stipulations are issued when the team has a serious concern(s) that needs be addressed in a particular way within a specific time frame.

## A. Recommendation Criteria

### Institutional Standard Rating

<i>Meets Standard</i>	Achieves "Meets Standard" across a substantial number of indicators
<i>Approaching Standard</i>	Achieves "Approaching Standard" across a substantial number of all indicators
<i>Emergent</i>	Has a substantial number of "Emergent" ratings on indicators
<i>No Evidence</i>	Has a substantial number of "No Evidence" ratings

### Program Rating

<i>Full Approval</i>	Achieves "Meets Standard" across a substantial number of the seven program approval standards
<i>Conditional Approval</i>	Achieves "Approaching Standard" across a substantial number of the seven program approval standards
<i>Deny Approval</i>	Has a substantial number of "No Evidence" and/or "Emergent" ratings

## VII. Timeline for Visits

<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>
One year	Institution is notified of approval expiration	President of the institution
1-2 months after request	Response to the institution and set date for on-site visit	VSBPE
12 weeks prior to on-site visit	Submit list of proposed members for Review Team to the institution	VSBPE
10 weeks prior to on-site visit	Deadline for any objections institution may have to Review Team composition	Institution
8 weeks prior to the on-site visit	Send copies of Institutional Portfolio to all members of the Review Team and a copy to the VTDOE.	Institution
4-6 weeks prior to the on-site visit	Preliminary review of the Institutional Portfolio	Review Team
4 weeks prior to the on-site visit	Pre-visit meeting	Institution, Review Team Chair, VTDOE staff
3 weeks prior to the on-site visit	Send agenda for the visit, map, lodging information to Review Team members and VT DOE.	Institution

<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>
6 weeks after visit	Draft of report sent to team members for feedback	Review Team Chair and ROPA Consultant
8 weeks after visit	Draft of report sent to the president of the institution for any factual corrections	ROPA Consultant
10 weeks after visit	Notify VTDOE if any corrections to the report are needed	Institution
12 weeks after visit	Final Report to the institution	ROPA Consultant
14 weeks after visit	Institution Rejoinder sent to VSBPE	Institution
3-5 months after visit	VSBPE meets with Review Team member and representative of the institution to review report and rejoinder prior to issuing a final decision on program approval status	VSBPE